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ABSTRACT

This module on weaving is one of eight modules designed to provide instruction on authentic Blue Ridge Mountain crafts to adult basic education students as a low cost. Contents include notes on the history of weaving; process used, including equipment and materials, as well as method described narratively and graphically; and the followup, where the student is told how to progress to higher levels of proficiency. The Fry readability level of this module is 3.5. A teacher's guide which lists resources for each module in the series is available separately (see Note). (MEK)

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SHARING THE ARTS OF THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

WEAVING

Conducted By:

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Special 309 Project

IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. Dorothy Lenore Prehn Capps
1907 - 1977

Mrs. Dorothy Lenore Prehn Capps lived with art all her life. She was born in Germany where her father was studying art. She grew up on Marshall Place in Webster Groves, Missouri. Marshall Place has become known as a street where many artists, musicians and inventors lived. While attending the art institute at the University of Missouri she won many awards for her art. In 1926, she married Shirley Thornton Capps. They made their home in Atlanta, Georgia. While in Atlanta, Mrs. Capps helped organize and was a member of the Chattahoochee Weaver's Guild. She was a member of the American Artists Professional League. She often had her works displayed at the Piedmont Park Art Festival in Atlanta. About 1936. Mr. and Mrs. Capps moved to the north Georgia mountains near Clayton. They have lived in Atlanta some but have spent most of their last 40 years in the north Georgia mountains.

Mrs. Capps made friends with many of the local people. She quickly learned to use materials that were at hand in her crafts as they did. She has used strips of cloth from old clothes, cotton from old mattresses, strips of nylon stockings and men's socks in her weavings.

She sold her weavings at Tallulah Falls Co-Op, the Yellow Daisy Festival in Stone Mountain and Atlanta's Piedmont Park Arts Festival.

The last few years of her life were filled with concern for the mountain people she loved. She was making plans to teach some of her neighbors how to weave on cardboard looms at the time of her death in October 1977.

"Dot" Capps was a great help to this project. She helped write the weaving and the braided rug modules. But more than that, her enthusiasm

for this project inspired the staff. She was so happy that people in other places would be able to share the mountain culture.

It is our hope that this project will be a credit to her dreams.

PREFACE

"Sharing the Arts of the Blue Ridge Mountains" is written so you, the AGE student, can learn about mountain arts. There are eight modules. Each module tells about the history of one art. Each module tells how to make a useful item the way mountain craftsmen do.

Crafts used to be a way of life for mountain families. People in the mountains were secluded. Families had to make everything they used. Later, city people wanted to buy these items. A crafts market developed. The mountain people found they could enjoy making things and have an income.

Today many people like to make items. It is a pleasure to make things. People still like to buy handmade items. Thus, there is still a market for items that are interesting to make.

In writing these modules, about 30 artists and craftsmen were interviewed. The craftsmen and artists shared the way they created their crafts. Project staff also visited Hambidge Center at Rabun Gap, Georgia; Berea in Kentucky; and Pi Beta Phi Arrowmont School, Gatlinburg, Tennessee. These schools are three of the ones which teach mountain arts and crafts. They were established to teach the mountain people some of the dying crafts in the early 1900's.

Today these schools, as well as John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, North Carolina, and Penland Institute, Penland, North Carolina, have classes. Many vocational-technical schools also teach crafts. Junior colleges sometimes offer non-credit craft courses. The Cooperative Extension Service holds some craft classes. Later you may want to go to a class at one of these schools.

Bob Nichols of Helen, Georgia, did the art work for this project.

Mrs. Helen Greear and Mrs. Dorothy Capps were the special consultants for this module. This project could not have been written without their help. Mrs. Greear and Mrs. Capps worked with project staff on techniques and procedures for weaving.

If you want to learn more about the Blue Ridge Mountain area or weaving, your AGE teacher has a list of books and resources.

MRS. HELEN GREEAR, Consultant

Mrs. Greear demonstrates weaving on a cardboard loom.

Mrs. Helen Greear of Helen, Georgia is an architect by profession. Her husband, Sol, is a painter. He often paints the scenes of the mountains he loves.

Mrs. Greear's love of art and design from her architectural training has expanded in her interest for weaving. She attended a weaving workshop at Hambidge Center in Rabun Gap, Georgia. This center, located in the heart of the Georgia mountains is known for its training programs in arts and crafts.

Mrs. Greear helped organize and is president of the Yonah Mountain Fiber Arts Guild. She is also a member of the Chattahoochee Weaver's Guild and the Handweaver's Guild of America. She has conducted a workshop on drafting and design for weaving. She has demonstrated the techniques of weaving at Unicoi State Park Lodge. There the emphasis of programs is on mountain crafts and culture.

WEAVING

I. ABOUT WEAVING

Weaving has been an important part of life in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The mountain people often lived far from stores. Cloth was expensive. Thus, weaving was done at home.

Women often raised sheep for wool. They also grew their flax or cotton. The fibers were then processed. First they were carded. Next the women would hand spin them into yarn. The yarn was then woven into items for home use. The women made fabric for cloths, shawls and purses. Also blankets, pillow tops, table covers, etc.

In the late 1800's, factory-made items became popular. The mountain people began to lose interest in weaving. Later there was new interest in all crafts. Groups of people began learning the old crafts. Craft schools were started. Weaving was one of the most popular crafts.

Mountain weavings were in the White House. Mrs. Woodrow Wilson picked rugs, coverlets and upholstery material. Mrs. Cooledge, Mrs. Hoover and Mrs. Roosevelt wore dresses of mountain fabric.

Today there is a new interest in weaving. Many women are again joining groups to learn the craft. Weaving guilds have been organized. The members swap patterns and ideas. They teach each other. There is a national guild and local chapters. (The Handweavers Guild of America, Inc.)

A weaver can make pretty and useful items. Weaving helps a person be aware of color. Patterns and textures must be thought about. Weavers use their own ideas to create original designs. The number of patterns is endless.

Before beginning to weave, look for ideas for colors and designs. Look through magazines. Cut out pictures that have interesting colors.

Collect samples of thread and yarn to be aware of textures. Get samples of different materials. Examine the weave.

WORDS TO KNOW

There are words that are basic in weaving. Know these before you begin the project.

1. Loom - the frame that you weave on.
2. Rya Knot - a type of knot used in weaving to make a fringe.
3. Shuttle - the piece that pulls the weft yarn through the warp yarn.
4. Tabby Weave - method of weaving going over one thread and under the next.
5. Warp - the thread that is put on the loom so that the cross thread (weft) can be woven through it.
6. Warping the loom - putting the first cords or threads on the loom.
7. Weft - the thread that is woven at right angles to the warp thread to make the weaving.

II. HOW TO WEAVE

The basic equipment needed for weaving is a loom, a shuttle, and a beater.

Early settlers used homemade looms. These were usually big and heavy. Most of these were hard to operate. Now looms are smaller and easier to use. Most looms are expensive. The goal of this project is to teach the basics of weaving without using a big loom.

The loom used in this project will be a simple cardboard one. The shuttle is also cardboard. (A yardstick or small piece of wood can be used for the shuttle.) Other simple looms can be made using a picture frame or a cardboard box. (Figure 1)

For the beater use a large heavy comb.

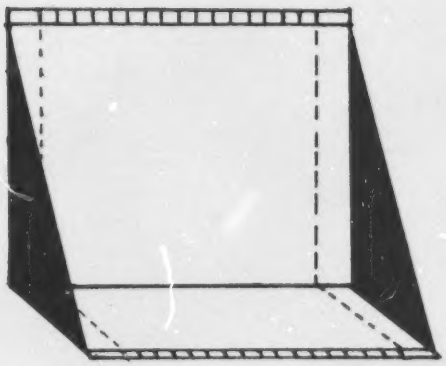


Figure 1

Items needed to do a weaving are:

1. Yarns, string or strips of cloth.
2. Needle.
3. Thread.
4. Masking tape or package tape.

It is not necessary to buy balls (skeins) of yarn. Many things can be used for weaving. Use yarn left over from other needlework crafts. Cut rags, sheets, old clothes, nylon stockings, and scraps into narrow strips. Weave with these strips. Broom sage, Johnson grass, rye, wheat and other grasses can also be used.

This module teaches how to weave a small piece. This piece can be used

for a tablemat, a pillow top, or a wall hanging. You might think of other uses.

MAKING THE LOOM:

Cut a square of cardboard 14" x 18" inches. The cardboard should not be too heavy. But do not use some so thin that it bends easily. Cardboard from a note pad is a good weight. Get a strip of masking tape or package tape. Put a border around the ends of the cardboard for support. (Figure 2)

Figure 2

Measure an inch from each edge at both the top and the bottom of the cardboard. Notch the cardboard at ¼-inch intervals. (Figure 3) Make sure that each notch on the top is directly across from the notch on the bottom.

Figure 3

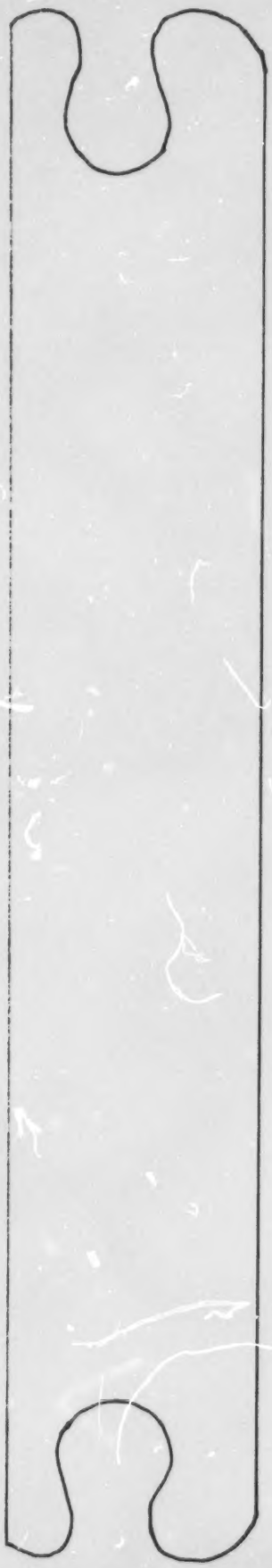
Draw a straight line between the first notches on each side. (The dotted line in Figure 4)

Figure 4

MAKING THE SHUTTLE:

Get a wooden yardstick or a very stiff piece of cardboard. Cut off a section that is 9 to 13 inches long. Use Figure 5 as a shuttle pattern. Cut a hole about one inch around in each end. Smooth it down. The shape allows the yarn to be wrapped on the shuttle.

Figure 5



Shuttles can be bought at craft stores. These are sturdy wooden shuttles usually.

WEAVING:

You are ready to begin the first step of weaving. This step is called warping the loom.

The warp is the thread that is put on the loom so that the other thread (the weft) can be woven through it. This makes the fabric.

To begin the warping, get a long piece of yarn. Knot one end of the yarn. Slip the knot through the first groove in the loom. Pull the yarn down straight. The warp threads should be tight. If you prefer, you may want to pull the warp so tight that the loom bends slightly. (Figure 6) Hook it in the first bottom groove. Wrap the yarn under the flap. Continue to wrap the yarn lengthwise. (Figure 7) The back should look like this. (Figure 8)

The warp can be all one color, or various colors. Changing colors will give a striped or checked effect. If you change the colors, tie a knot in the first cord. Hook it on the loom. Then tie a knot in the new cord. Hook it on

Figure 6

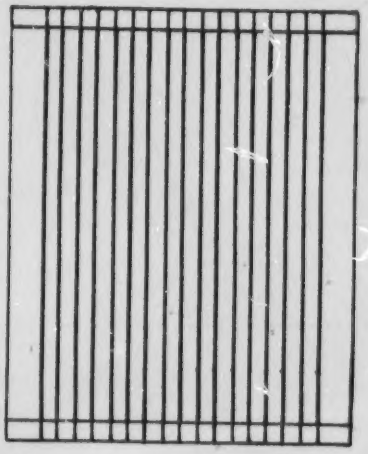


Figure 7

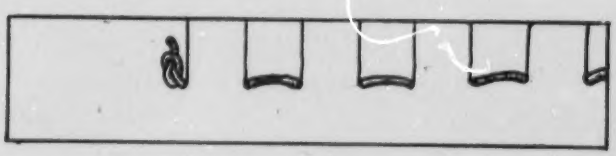


Figure 8

the loom. Continue to warp the loom.

When the warp is in place, get a long piece of yarn. Wrap it length-wise around the shuttle. This will be the weft.

Now, cut two 1" strips of cardboard. Make them the width of the loom. Weave them in and out between the warp threads. Pull them to the bottom and top of the loom. (Figure 9)

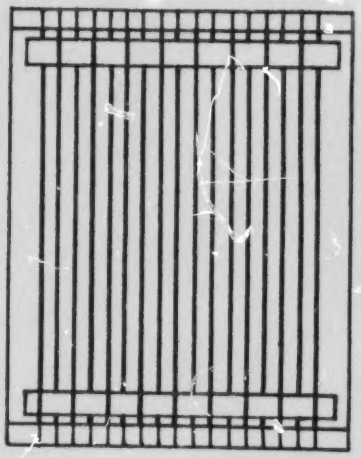


Figure 9

Unroll two lengths of yarn from the shuttle. Now, weave the shuttle through the warp. Begin by going over the first thread. Go under the second thread. Go over the third thread. Continue across the width of the warp. (Figure 10) Leave a short piece of yarn, called a "tail", at the end of the first row.

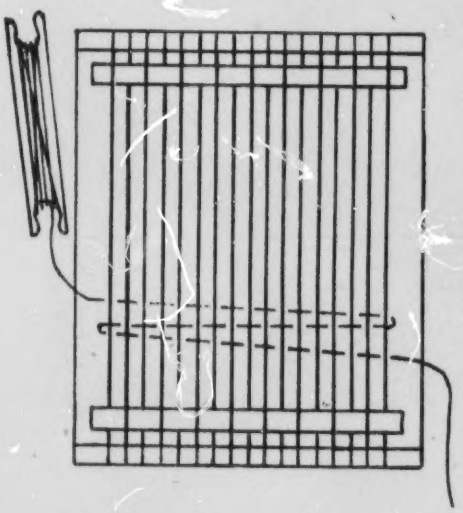


Figure 10

To secure the end, weave the short "tail" into the first few threads. (Figure 11) Go under the first thread, over the second, etc. Weave across 5 to 8 warp threads. Cut off any excess. Do this each time you begin or end a piece of yarn.

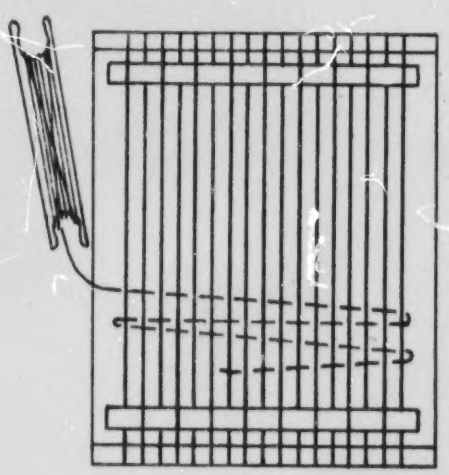


Figure 11

Now comb down the warp threads so that the woven weft thread is as tight as possible against the bottom of the cardboard. This is beating the weft. (Figure 12)

Now weave your shuttle over and under in the opposite direction. If the last thread on the previous line was under, begin the next line with over. If the previous line was over, begin with under. This method of weaving is called tabby.

Continue to work back and forth across the loom. Alternate going over and under the first thread.

Colors can be changed to get a special effect.

Always beat the weft thread down with a comb after each line of weaving.

Try to keep the outside warp threads on the line you drew on the loom. It is easy to pull the weft thread too tight. This pulls the sides in.

Continue until the weaving is completed. The weaving should be up to the second cardboard strip. Weave the end under. Turn the loom over. Clip the loops of yarn from the back in the middle of the loop. (Figure 13)

Remove the fabric. Slide the cardboard strips from the weaving. Now sew the fabric on both ends. (Figure 14)

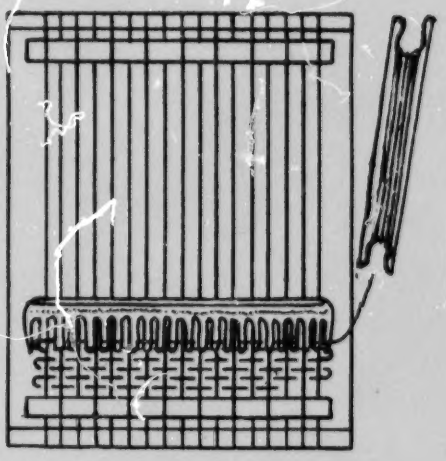


Figure 12

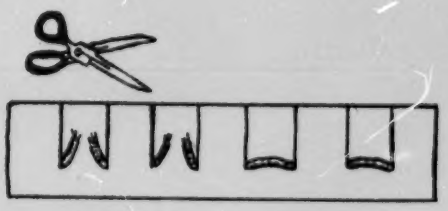


Figure 13

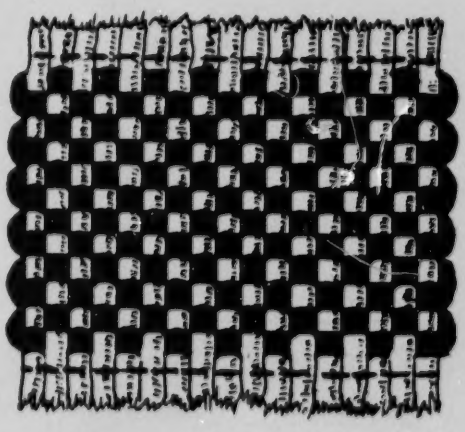


Figure 14

This can be sewn by hand or machine. Sewing keeps the material from unraveling. Now unravel the ends of the warp thread. This creates a fringe.

Now judge the weaving. Are the colors pleasing? Are the patterns interesting? Are the sides straight? If the answer is yes to these three questions, then this is a good weaving.

III. WHAT NEXT?

There is much more to learn. Weaves can be varied to create other patterns. An example is weaving over two, under one.

Texture can be added to the weavings. A rya knot weaves a fringe into the piece. Colors and various weights of yarn also add texture. Combinations are endless.

Regular looms can increase weaving speed. Also, a regular loom can make a larger weaving. Cloth, tapestries, curtains, and tableclothes can be made. Later try dying your own yarns. This can be especially interesting by using natural dyes.

For further information on weaving, contact the Handweaver's Guild of America. They can refer you to a weaver's guild in your area.

Other books may be of help in learning about weaving. The Adult Education teacher has a list of books.

Places to get more information on weaving:

Adult Education teacher.

Local Cooperative Extension Service Office.

Handweaver's Guild of America, Inc. 998 Farmington Avenue. West Hartford, Connecticut 06107.

Places to get information on looms and yarn:

Lilly Mills. Shelby, North Carolina - catalogue.

The Last Whole Earth Catalogue. 558 Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park, California 94025.

Emile Bernat.(wool yarn) Depot and Mendon Streets, Uxbridge, Mass. 01569.

Wehatkins Yarn Mills. (heavy yarn) Westpoint, Georgia.

Edgemont Yarn Service.(heavy yarn) Maysville, Kentucky.

Stanley Berroco, Inc. Mendon Street, Uxbridge, Mass. 01659.